

Inspection of Whitchurch Primary School

Eastfield Lane, Whitchurch-on-Thames, Reading, Berkshire RG8 7EJ

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 November 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 14 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and proud to belong to this small, caring community school. Their attendance is high because they really enjoy coming to school. Pupils feel excited about the learning opportunities that staff provide. As one parent stated: 'Children are at the heart of learning.'

Pupils know that all staff at the school want the very best for them. Consequently, they want to learn and rise to the challenges the school provides. Overall, pupils' achievements are positive, and they learn well through the school's improved curriculum. Pupils really value the 'Lucky Stars' rewards they receive in recognition of their achievements.

There are warm and trusting relationships that permeate throughout the school. Younger pupils feel well looked after by older pupils. They are confident that they can share any concerns with 'anti-bullying ambassadors' and 'playground buddies'. Pupils actively follow the school's motto of 'being an upstander, not a bystander' and feel empowered to manage any minor disagreements.

Enrichment goes beyond the academic curriculum. This is a crucial part of the school's ethos. Pupils enjoy a range of trips, visitors and special events. There are several clubs on offer, including 'maths munchers'. These are well attended by pupils of all ages.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has a clear mission: to provide a high-quality education for all pupils. There is an ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum in place for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school ensures that any additional needs that pupils may have are identified as early as possible. Pupils are then quickly supported to avoid any wasted opportunities in their learning.

In most subjects, the school has identified the important knowledge, skills and vocabulary it wants pupils to learn. In stronger areas, such as mathematics, pupils have secure knowledge and can explain their thinking clearly. This begins in Reception, where adults provide a range of opportunities for children to practise counting and exploring number in a range of activities. In some other curriculum areas, however, where learning is not as well developed, pupils do not always systematically remember the most important knowledge they have been taught. Instead, pupils may remember and recall the experiences and 'wow moments' in lessons. Pupils therefore have some gaps in their understanding and are not always confident as they move on to explore new learning.

The school places a high priority on reading. In early years, children experience a range of stories as part of their curriculum. Pupils enjoy the challenge of broadening the range of authors they read. They learn to share their reading journeys online

with staff and their peers. Pupils from Reception to Year 2 consistently learn through the school's phonics programme. Teachers check pupils' phonics knowledge carefully and systematically. They use this information to provide any extra support for those pupils who need help to catch up. Pupils love receiving the rewards they are given in recognition of their regular reading.

The school has a welcoming and engaging learning environment. In early years, children build the foundations of learning through mostly purposeful activities and positive relationships. Staff work well to secure children's language and communication skills. Children are encouraged to be inquisitive and to show determination as they complete activities. Staff teach pupils to explore their emotions. This helps them to develop self-control and independence.

Staff understand the needs of pupils well in this small school. Staff have created a shared sense of community and purpose. They set clear expectations for behaviour, and most pupils engage well in lessons. If pupils occasionally do not demonstrate the expected behaviours, staff provide effective support to address this. The youngest children learn routines quickly, and this helps them as they progress through the school. This also helps pupils to maintain the high levels of attendance that already exist across the school.

The school's approach to supporting pupils' personal development is exceptional. Staff are determined to ensure that inclusivity and diversity thread through all aspects of school life. Pupils learn age-appropriate knowledge of healthy relationships. They gain a deep understanding of the wider world through learning about other cultures and religions. Pupils are accepting of differences in their views of each other and reflect upon what this means. Pupils enjoy the range of clubs on offer. These help to develop their interests and talents. Pupils learn about eating well and maintaining an active lifestyle. They also learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

Pupils' sense of belonging to the school community is shared by staff, who are also proud to work here and feel appreciated by leaders and governors.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some areas of the curriculum are still at an early stage of implementation. This means that the strong practice seen more widely is not yet fully secure in a small number of subjects and, consequently, pupils are not achieving as highly as intended. The school should continue its work to refine the curriculum in these areas to ensure it is securely and consistently embedded.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	123009
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10256332
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	138
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Eleanor Sugrue
Headteacher	Dawn Chesters
Website	www.whitchurchprimary.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 June 2009, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school runs a breakfast and after-school club for pupils.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- During the inspection, all Year 5 and 6 pupils were on a residential trip and therefore unable to complete the pupil survey. Inspectors held a video conference call with some of these pupils to obtain their views of the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, curriculum leader, teachers, support staff and pupils.
- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. She also had a telephone call with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and design, and physical education. In each subject, inspectors met with subject leaders, talked to pupils, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to some pupils read to adults. Other aspects of the school's curriculum were also considered.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspection team took account of a range of other information, including the school's development plans, school policies, the school's curriculum, website, and minutes from governing body meetings.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire, including the free-text comments that were submitted. They also took account of the responses to the confidential staff survey and gathered the views of both staff and pupils throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Numera Anwar, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jon Hills

Ofsted Inspector

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